

The Manifest Presence of God (Part1)

The manifest presence of God refers to instances where God's presence is not just acknowledged, but His attributes are vividly experienced by individuals or groups. It is when God reveals Himself tangibly and relationally. When we speak of His manifest presence we are talking about God on assignment, He goes with you with a specific purpose. It is similar to a commanded blessing as opposed to a general blessing. Sometimes it is referred to as the glory of God. **God's manifest presence is not static. It can increase or decrease in intensity.** There were instances in scripture where His presence would lift. *1 Sam 4:21 (ESV)* *And she named the child Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel!" because the ark of God had been captured and because of her father-in-law and her husband.* Phineas' wife went into premature labour after seeing that her husband and father-in-law (Eli) had died. 30 000 Israelites had been killed and the ark had been captured. The situation was dire and yet that is the state of many churches and households today, the glory has departed. We must not take His manifest presence for granted. **"The Scriptures and history have proven time and again the Manifest Presence of the Lord is our only hiding place, our only deliverer, our only healer."** Don Nori

God's omnipresence

The fact that God is omnipresent is one of the most unique and differentiating attributes and this must not be minimized.

Psalm 139:7–10 (NIV) *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."*

Jeremiah 23:23–24 (NIV) *"'Am I only a God nearby,' declares the Lord, 'and not a God far away? Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?' declares the Lord. 'Do not I fill heaven and earth?' declares the Lord."*

Proverbs 15:3 (NIV) *"The eyes of the Lord are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good."*

The fact that He is already omnipresent means that it is possible to take that presence to another level wherever you are. I can see or hear a couple struggling but not always be summoned to display my skills in counselling them. I am there but not in all my glory as it were. His omnipresence does not take away from His manifest presence.

"His omnipresence is universal, but His manifest presence is intentional. One is a fact of His being; the other is an invitation to encounter."

What are some biblical references that can be translated to the term "manifest presence"?

1. Pānîm (פָּנִים) – "Face" or "Presence"

The literal meaning of this is "Face". The figurative meaning is personal, intimate presence and it is often used when referring to standing before God or being in His intimate company.

"My Presence (pānîm) will go with you, and I will give you rest." – Exodus 33:14 (NIV)

2. Kabôd (כְּבוֹד) – "Glory" or "Weight"

This word literally means weightiness or heaviness. It figuratively speaks of the visible, felt manifestation of God's splendour or power. It is often associated with atmospheric shifts, temples, or glory-clouds.

“Then the glory (kabôd) of the Lord filled the temple.” – 2 Chronicles 7:1

3. Shekinah (שְׁכִינָה) – “Dwelling” or “Settling” (Post-Biblical Hebrew)

It is not found in the Old Testament directly but rooted in the verb shākan (שָׁכַן) which means to dwell.

Shekinah refers to the visible, **dwelling presence of God**, especially in the tabernacle or temple. It is widely used in rabbinic and theological literature.

“Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell (shākan) among them.” – Exodus 25:8

4. Ra-ah, ‘Āmar and Nāg’a – “God appeared” or “Touched” or “Said”

These are used when God appears visibly or affects someone physically (e.g., angelic visitation, visions, physical encounter). These terms are often paired with direct experience of God’s presence.

Ra-ah or Nirah – The Lord appeared or was seen

Genesis 17:1 “The LORD appeared to Abram...”

Isaiah 6:7 “He touched my mouth and said: ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away.’”

This is the seraph touching (Naga) Isaiah’s lips with a burning coal in his vision of God’s throne.

Gen 1:3 “And God said, ‘Let there be light.’”

This is the word, Amar.

5. Epiphaneia (ἐπιφάνεια) – “Appearing” or “Manifestation”

This literally means shining forth, sudden appearance of divine glory. It refers to both Christ’s first coming and future return, and sometimes personal revelation.

“...by the appearing (epiphaneia) of our Savior, Christ Jesus...” – 2 Timothy 1:10

6. Doxa (δόξα) – “Glory”

This is the Greek equivalent of kabôd. It refers to radiant, awe-inspiring divine majesty—often experienced visibly or spiritually.

“...we have seen His glory (doxa), the glory of the One and Only...” – John 1:14

7. Phaneroō (φανερώω) – “To Make Visible, Manifest”

This word emphasizes making something previously hidden, visible or known. It is commonly used for the revealing of God’s character or presence in Christ.

“The life appeared (phaneroō); we have seen it and testify to it...” – 1 John 1:2

8. Enōpion (ἐνώπιον) – “Before, In the Presence Of”

It literally means in the face of, often used for standing before God’s throne. It captures a relational, reverent awareness of God’s nearness.

"And they will stand before (enōpion) the Son of Man." – Luke 21:36

12 Dynamics of God's Manifest Presence

1. There are times when God is manifest in our midst, but we are not always conscious of it.

Gen 28:10-12,16-19

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it....16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

18 Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. 19 He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

God can appear to you in a dream

2. In His manifest presence there is brokenness, deep conviction of sin, resulting in worship.

Isaiah 6:1–5 (NIV) "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips... and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."

When God's presence is manifest, there's often conviction of sin, humility, and awe.

A response of worship sustains this presence.

3. God's manifest presence brings Healing and Strength

Luke 5:17 (NIV) "And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick."

The manifest presence of God often brings physical healing and restoration.

4. Purposeful corporate gatherings for His glory attract His manifest presence.

Matthew 18:20 (NIV) "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

5. In the manifest presence of God there is Freedom and Transformation

2 Corinthians 3:17 (NIV) "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

God's manifest presence breaks chains—emotional, spiritual, and relational.

God's manifest presence brings liberation from fear, sin, bondage, or shame.

“The more conscious of God’s presence the more I feel like being myself, the less conscious of His presence, the more I feel I need to prove myself.” RT Kendall

6. Fullness of Joy is found in His manifest presence

Psalms 16:11 (NIV) "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

His presence brings deep, lasting joy, not circumstantial happiness.

7. Fullness of rest is only found in His presence

Exodus 33:14 The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

Presence here is *panai* (my face). God's personal presence, nearness, or favour. Can imply relational closeness and active guidance.

Rest = to rest, settle down, repose. Often associated with security, peace, and divine care

8. In God’s manifest presence there is no room for my flesh.

Exodus 40:34-35 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

1 Kings 8:10-11 When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the Lord. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled his temple

2 Chronicles 5:13-14...Then the temple of the Lord was filled with the cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.

We must make room for His glory to fill the entire, space not partially but fully. This only happens when we set aside our glory.

9. God has intentionally chosen to be present in our midst. This is His covenant preference.

Leviticus 26:11-12 I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.

Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them..."

His nature is that He is not remote. He is like a stay-at-home dad who is also a mega provider. He has chosen to be with us, manifesting all His attributes whilst being responsible and providing.

10. Purposeful gathering as believers activates His manifest presence.

Matthew 18:20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.

This can be prayer or corporate worship in Sunday services.

Deuteronomy 4:7 What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him?

God's relational attributes and desire to reveal Himself to us is one of His unique attributes distinguishing Him from false gods. This verse also reveals that prayer is one of the activities that activates deeper dimensions of God's presence.

11. Praise activates the manifest presence of God

Ps 22:3 (NKJV) But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

God will often manifest the attributes you praise Him concerning.

Yoshev – you sit or dwell in the praises of Israel

“Worship is essential to God's plan of redemption... Where worship is released, God's presence comes to dwell, and where God's presence abides, there will be power...” AW Tozer

12. There is a positive correlation between obedience and the manifest presence of God

John 14:21 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

John 14:23 Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

Obedience is not just an act of love—it is a doorway to presence. God makes His home with those who keep His Word."

Conclusion

We've journeyed through the Scriptures and seen that the **manifest presence of God** is not merely a theological idea, but a lived, experiential reality. Unlike His omnipresence—which is constant and universal—His manifest presence is personal, purposeful, and powerful. It brings healing, freedom, joy, conviction, and rest. It's not something we can manufacture, but it is something we can *host*.

We must never become so familiar with the idea of God's presence that we lose our hunger for the fullness of His glory. Like Jacob, we must not sleep through sacred moments unaware—declaring only afterward, “Surely the Lord was in this place, and I did not know it.” May we be people who are *aware, responsive, and honouring* of His presence.